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NAVAL WAR COLLEGE
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ON TO BAGHDAD?

by

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A paper submitted to the Faculty of the Naval War College in partial satisfaction of the requirements of the Department of Operations.

The contents of this paper reflect my own personal views and are not necessarily endorsed by the Naval War College of the Department of the Navy.

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PREFACE

The scope of this paper when discussing battlefield conditions is limited to ground forces in theater during Operation Desert Storm, their capabilities and sustainability. All specific information concerning war aims in Chapter II, unless otherwise noted, was taken from the Department of Defense's interim report on the war. The situational facts contained in Chapter III come from General Schwarzkopf's press brief of 27 February, 1991, unless noted otherwise. As used herein the term coalition refers to all nation's participating in the war. All references are unclassified.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The decisive results of Operation Desert Storm gave ris
to the question of why U.S. and coalition forces stopped short
of taking over Iraq and forcing Saddam Hussein from power
altogether. The immediate response must be that removal of
Saddam Hussein from power was not an explicit aim of the Desert
Storm effort.

An examination of the war objectives and the state of
Iraqi capability at the time of war termination yields
conclusive evidence that the aims of the coalition in the Gulf
had been met at the time of the ceasefire, 28 February, 1991.

However, the general situation at the time would seem, on
the surface at least, to support a strong case for continuing
the offensive phase all the way into Baghdad, if necessary, to
eliminate the B'ath Party regime and its influence in the Gulf
region. The overwhelming success of coalition forces and the
severely degraded capability of Iraq notwithstanding, the
stronger argument may be one which favors war termination as it
occurred.

The dilemma of war termination versus continuation at this
point in Operation Desert Storm is best solved by a comparison
of the cost-benefit assessments of both options. To the

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operational commander, such a comparison is critical in recognizing the best time to cease fighting.

Certainly, the consideration of a change in war aims would pose some questions in the mind of the commander: will this change in objectives support strategic goals; how will the change affect my ability to achieve the objective; will costs inherent in the new aim be acceptable; what will be the likely consequences of achieving the objective; and are we prepared to deal with those consequences?

The following analysis focuses on these issues. The methodology employs a review of the objectives at the onset of Operation Desert Storm, an assessment of the general situation at the time those objectives were met, the introduction of a hypothetical sequel objective to remove the current Iraqi regime from power, and a discussion of some inherent problems and potential consequences of achieving that objective. Finally, some conclusions are drawn as to whether continuation of Operation Desert Storm would have been a desirable course of action.

CHAPTER II

THE OBJECTIVES

The National policy goals established at the beginning of Operation Desert Shield (the defensive phase) and the military objectives at the onset of Operation Desert Storm (the offensive phase) were closely related. As should always be the case in good war planning and execution, military objectives should serve and support the intent of strategic and political ones. A review of the objectives of the war and the military conditions created reveals the alignment between national and military goals and the degree to which those goals were achieved. As reported in the Interim Report to Congress[1] there were four national and four military goals.

The first objective at the national level was the immediate, complete and unconditional withdrawal of all of Iraq's forces from Kuwait. In support of this goal, military strategy included two goals, those of neutralizing Saddam Hussein's ability to direct his army in the country of Kuwait and subsequent ejection of those forces, including Republican Guard, from the country. These conditions were effectively created. Supply and communication lines were among the first casualties of the air campaign, as were Iraqi command and control bunkers. Iraqi air reconnaissance capabilities did not

exist. Inside Kuwait, Iraqi forces were surrounded and offering no opposition; many were attempting to flee the country in the direction of Basra, inside Iraq. Iraqi offensive armor capability was rendered ineffective and Republican Guard Divisions in the Kuwaiti theater of operations were reduced to two infantry divisions.[2] In short, Saddam Hussein's ability to resupply and direct military operations in Kuwait was destroyed and his troops for all intents and purposes no longer held Kuwait.

The second national objective of the war was the restoration of the legitimate government in Kuwait. To serve this purpose, military direction was given to assist in that restoration. At the time of the ceasefire on 28 February, friendly special operations forces were inside Kuwait City, clearing it in preparation for the return of the Emir.[3]

Thirdly, the National Command Authority set the goal of ensuring the stability and security of Saudi Arabia and the Persian Gulf. The military goals of neutralizing Iraq's military threat and ejecting its troops from Kuwait partially served this objective. In addition, the military ordered the destruction of known ballistic and nuclear, chemical and biological capabilities inside Iraq. During the air campaign, all weapons of mass destruction which could be targeted were

successfully eliminated,[4] further reducing the potential threat to Saudi Arabia and the Gulf from distant Iraqi attacks.

The last national policy objective established was the safety and protection of the lives of Americans abroad. Fortunately, this objective was met via diplomatic avenues prior to commencement of the offensive, when Iraqi American "guests" were released and allowed to return home.

Clearly, from the military conditions created during Operation Desert Storm, all explicit national goals had been supported by military objectives and had been met. There were however, implicit goals, both at the national and operational levels which bear mentioning. These are: (1) to maintain the cohesion of the coalition and (2) to minimize casualties.[5] Both had been achieved at the time of war termination. Each is critical to an analysis of the suitability of continuing the war beyond the point at which the ceasefire occurred. These will be looked at in greater depth in subsequent chapters.

Having accomplished all objectives by the 27th of February, the coalition effort in the Gulf had served its purpose. Continuation of the offensive beyond this point would have constituted a change in war aims, necessitating a new, sequential objective. The potential effects of shifting war aims will be explored in Chapter IV.

First, it is helpful to take an overview of the general situation as it existed immediately prior to the point at which the ceasefire was ordered.

CHAPTER III

THE GENERAL SITUATION: 27 FEBRUARY 1991[1]

Coalition Forces

Coalition forces are holding Kuwait unopposed. 1st Marine Division is in control of the International Airport in Kuwait and 2nd Marine Division and the U.S. Army Tiger Brigade are in control of the highways and crossroads to the west and northwest of Kuwait City. U.S. and British armored forces have virtually annihilated the eight Republican Guard Divisions situated in the Kuwait theater of operations.

Highway Eight inside Iraq at the Euphrates River Valley is held by U.S. Army 101 Airborne Division, as is Al Salman Airfield in southeastern Iraq. French forces are in place to protect the coalition left flank. Special Operations forces are inside Iraqi territory providing reconnaissance. The 26th Marine Expeditionary Unit is afloat in the Persian Gulf and Special Operations Forces are conducting mine-clearing operations.

Coalition logistics bases are well-established inside Saudi Arabia. Fuel and ammunition bases are operational inside Iraq, as well. Food supplies will support 25 days; fuel supplies, five days; ammunition supplies, 66 days.[2] Command and Control (C^2) and supply lines are functional but C^2 and

supply trucks are having difficulty keeping pace with M1A1 tanks. Continuation of offensive effort will require more trucks.[3]

Equipment is currently being kept operational through special emphasis on frequent cleaning and inspection and regular care.[4] Strong southerly winds will become prevalent from the third week of March through mid-April, causing fierce dust and sandstorms which will have significant impact on equipment and personnel readiness.[5]

Major roads and crossroads are under coalition control. Hard packed sand will support wheeled vehicles. Coalition forces can reach Baghdad in 24-36 hours.[6]

Command, Control, Communication and Intelligence (C^3I) is functional. Coalition leadership is intact. Troops are well supplied and motivated.

Iraqi Forces

Iraqi Air Forces have fled to Iran. Defense lines west of Basra are broken and soldiers are attempting to escape into Basra. An estimated two-thirds of the Iraqi Army has been neutralized. Four divisions of the Republican Guard remain intact outside of Kuwait.[7]

Resupply and communication lines are severed. Much artillery has been destroyed and the number of tanks reduced by an estimated 50%.[8] Remaining equipment is in poor condition and maintenance is not being done due to lack of skilled personnel to perform it.[9] Iraq has no air reconnaissance or C^2 capability. There is apparently no intelligence work being done.

Iraqi fortifications are weakened as a result of the air campaign. Minefields have been detonated and oil trenches burned out. The country's infrastructure has been severely damaged. Large segments of the population are without water and/or sanitation. Due to a lack of educated men, Iraq is unable to recoup from damages inflicted by the air campaign.[10]

Leadership is poor. Iraqi fighting will is shattered.

The Assessment

General Schwarzkopf, in his brief to the press on 27 February, 1991 made the following statement:

> "Ladies and gentlemen, when we were here, we were 150 miles from Baghdad and there was nobody between us and Baghdad. If it had been our intention to destroy the country, to over-run the country, we could have done it unopposed for all intents and purposes from the afternoon of the 24th."

CHAPTER IV

THE HYPOTHETICAL SEQUEL

As previously established, all objectives of the Gulf War had been met as of the ceasefire date and continuing beyond that point would have required a change in war aims, a new sequential objective, which might have read: continue the offensive inside Iraq in order to remove the current regime from power.

This new objective raises many questions, not least of which is how rational would this new war aim have been? By focusing on the static picture of war in the previous chapter, it becomes easy to draw the conclusion that coalition forces could have and therefore should have taken down Saddam Hussein and all those of his party who supported his tyrannical rule. The offensive phase had gone well. Iraqi forces in theater were defeated. Friendly forces were positioned and poised to enter Basra and then turn toward Baghdad. Contingency plans for both ground forces[1] and logistics[2] had been developed which would support the coalition in doing so. There was little resistance or offensive capability on the part of the Iraqis. Furthermore, they may not have even known of the advance until coalition forces were inside the cities, owing to their obvious

lack of intelligence capability. Empirically, from this snapshot in time, Iraq was ours for the taking.

However, stasis in war is not reality. War is a dynamic process which requires broad focus and dictates that the operational commander consider closely the dynamics -- both actual and potential - of the situation. Of primary concern must be how a change in war aims will affect the present and future situations and impact the ability to achieve those aims. Michael Codner, in his note "The Implications of War Termination Considerations for the Operational Commander" states: ". . . changing war aims will mean changing strategic objectives which could profoundly affect a campaign plan."

In the case of Operation Desert Storm, the addition of the hypothetical objective would have clearly indicated a change in national, or strategic, goals which in all probability would have had a detrimental affect on the war effort. A decision to continue the offensive into Iraq after Kuwait had been liberated and the immediate offensive threat to the region eliminated may have been viewed by Arab members of the coalition as an act of pure aggression against another Arab State. This is a concept which the Arab brotherhood - at least on the public political level - particularly abhor. Taking this into consideration, could the operational commander have

expected continued support from Arab countries? How would this aim have affected the cohesion of the coalition and U.S. long-term relations with the arabic world?

The United States was militarily and logistically dependent on Host Nation Support in the Gulf War. Saudi Arabia provided food, water, fuel, and transportation into the theater of operations and accommodations, facilities and logistics bases inside Saudi Arabia.[3] The entire campaign infrastructure was situated on Saudi land. The addition of an unacceptable objective might well have precipitated withdrawal of support, both logistic and military. Even with this support in place, logistic lines were experiencing difficulties. Without this support, however, sustainability would have been difficult if not impossible.

Had sustainability and the cohesion of the coalition not been key issues, the feasibility of accomplishing the new aim would certainly have been a major concern of the operational commander. Furthermore, it is questionable as to whether a continued advance into Iraq would have yielded acceptable results in four key areas: casualties, escalation control, post-war requirements, and long-term stability in the region.

Necessary to the achievement of the objective would have been the seizure of Basra and elimination of the residual

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military threat there. Baghdad also would have to have been secured in order to establish some form of control in Iraq. (It is unreasonable to expect that a group of nations would march into Iraq, destroy its government and then withdraw, leaving the country in chaos.) The non-Arab forces poised to accomplish these tasks were largely composed of heavy armored units[4] designed, equipped and trained for the destruction of other heavy armored units, not for inner-city warfare. What would have been the cost in terms of casualties upon advancing into Basra and proceeding on to Baghdad? Iraq itself teaches us the best lesson here. During the Iran-Iraq War, Iraq sent armored units in to capture major cities without adequate infantry support and suffered heavy losses.[5]

Taking the battle to the remnants of the Iraqi Army would require some response on their part, whether acquiescence or resistance. In the face of acquiescence, one might easily conclude that all of the war's immediate problems would have been solved. However, it is not probable that the coalition forces would have encountered anything but resistance from the remaining Republican Guard, given the strong incentives which Saddam provides for their loyalty[*] Resistance might also be expected from the prevalent pan-Arab contingent and Saddam

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[*] Loyalty or death.

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loyalists, particularly in Baghdad. Add to these risks the risk of casualties caused by disease in populated areas without adequate sanitation and the cost of inner-city warfare increases to an unacceptable level.**

The issue of escalation control must be addressed. While the air campaign had effectively destroyed all known nuclear, biological and chemical warhead production capability in Iraq, there may well have been stores of such warheads which were not known or could not be identified. Coalition efforts had been successful in eradicating static SCUD missile sites, but some mobile launchers could not be targeted with any degree of success. It is conceivable that once backed into a corner, with no options other than surrender or total defeat, Saddam might have attacked neutral countries, such as Israel, in order to refocus worldwide attention and incite public opinion in Israel, compelling that country's involvement. Or, he might target Saudi oil fields, creating widespread devastation. This would have directly countered U.S. policy objectives.

Concerns surrounding immediate post-war requirements would have to come to the forefront following the annihilation of the Iraqi regime, particularly since there was no plan developed

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** Estimates of casualties under these circumstances exceed the capacity of medical treatment facilities in place.[6]

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for coalition forces to follow beyond attainment of the original objectives.[6] One thing would certainly be clear: Iraq could not be left ungoverned. Many questions would have to be answered. Who will govern, and how, and for how long? Are coalition nations willing and able to commit to a peacekeeping presence? Do they have enough forces to commit to controlling a fragmented Iraq? How would this commitment affect operational capability to keep other commitments and respond to other contingencies? Would all coalition nations be willing and able to shoulder a fair share of the cost of rebuilding the Iraqi infrastructure and the cost of new construction to support an occupation there?

Aside from immediate post-war problems, there is the issue of long-term post-war relations. What might be the politico-military effects of establishing coalition military occupation in Iraq over a period of time? How long would Iran, for instance, tolerate coalition military control of the two most holy Shiite cities located in Iraq? How would coalition government with U.S. involvement affect U.S. relationships with Israel? If occupation were left to Arab nations alone, could Arabic in-fighting be expected, given the diverse national interests and political aims in the region? Would having removed the Iraqi government from power have solved a major

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problem in the Middle East or simply added new dimensions to
old existing ones?

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSIONS

> The object of war is a better state of peace -
> even if from your own point of view. Hence it is
> essential to conduct war with constant regard to the
> peace you devise.[1]

From an operational standpoint, Operation Desert Storm was terminated at the optimal time. All military objectives were met, all national goals served, and resources were not yet completely exhausted. Furthermore, the cost of removing Saddam's regime could easily have exceeded the value of doing so. Potential casualties from inner-c'' warfare and the added strain on logistics lines already expei.. ring difficulty may have impeded success while raising the cost of the effort. The possibility of indiscriminate escalation on the part of a trapped Saddam Hussein, the military requirement of occupying a captured Iraq and the certain instability this would create in the region are hardly equitable trade-offs for removing the diminished threat of one man from a Middle East which already has so many other problems to resolve.

Politically, the objective to continue Desert Storm beyond the 27th of February would not have been established. Given the facts as they were, this would have been an undesirable course of action. War is nothing more than an instrument for

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achieving political objectives.[2] Once military objectives cease to serve political ones, then the military aim becomes irrational in the sense that it has no reason for existing. This would have been the case in Desert Storm. A decision to continue fighting would have directly opposed the political aim of maintaining the cohesiveness of the coalition. The decision would have caused the collapse of the coalition under the pressure of differing political ideologies.

In coalition warfare, it is essential that objectives be based not only upon the military conditions to be created but also upon the political postures and aims of the individual nations involved. Objectives need to be limited so as neither to cause the withdrawal of any state or group of states nor to eliminate the possibility of future cooperation.

Having established appropriate objectives and achieved overwhelming success, it is still necessary to recognize the best time to terminate war. That time is when the cost - both military and political - of continuing the war will outweigh the value of its results.

NOTES

CHAPTER II

1.   U.S. Department of Defense, Conduct of the Persian Gulf Conflict: An Interim Report (Washington: 1991) pp. 1-1 - 1-2. All information included in this chapter is taken from this report unless otherwise specifically noted.

2. Norman H. Schwarzkopf, "The Strategy Behind Operation Desert Storm", ROA National Security Report, April 1991. p.v.

3.   Ibid., p.33.

4.   Ibid., p.v.

5.   Interview with H. Conway Zeigler, CDR, USN, Operations Intelligence Officer, U.S. Naval War College, Newport, RI: 27 January, 1992.

CHAPTER III

1. Norman H. Schwarzkopf, "The Strategy Behind Operation Desert Storm", ROA National Security Report, April 1991. p.v. All information contained in this chapter is taken from this source unless otherwise noted.

2.   William G. Pagonis and Harold E. Paugh, "Good Logistics is Combat Power: The Logistics Sustainment of Operation Desert Storm", Military Review, September 1991, p.37.

3. U.S. Department of Defense, Conduct of the Persian Gulf Conflict: An Interim Report, (Washington: 1991) p.6-5.

4.   Ibid.

5.   Trevor Dupuy, et al., How to Defeat Saddam Hussein: Scenarios and Strategies for the Gulf War, (NY: Warner Books, 1991) p.151.

6.   Interview with Jeffrey Hammond, Major, USA, U.S. Naval War College, Newport, RI: 28 January 1992.

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7.   Interview with H. Conway Zeigler, CDR, USN, Operations Intelligence Officer, U.S. Naval War College, Newport, RI: 27 January 1992.

8.   Ibid.

9.   Norman Friedman, Desert Victory: The War for Kuwait, (Annapolis, MD: U.S. Naval Institute Press, 1991), p.249.

10.   Ibid., p.251.

11.   Schwarzkopf, p.32.

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1.   Interview with Jeffrey ammond, Major, USA, U.S. Naval War College, Newport, RI: 28 January 1992.

2.   William G. Pagonis and Harold E. Paugh, "Good Logistics is Combat Power: The Logistics Sustainment of Operation Desert Storm", Military Review, September 1991, p.34.

3.   U.S. Department of Defense, Conduct of the Persian Gulf Conflict: An Interim Report, (Washington: 1991) p.7-3.

4.   Trevor Dupuy, et al., How to Defeat Saddam Hussein: Scenarios and Strategies for the Gulf War, (NY: Warner Books, 1991) pp. 156-166.

5.   John F. Antal, "The Iraqi Army Forged in the (other) Gulf war", Military Review, February 1991, p.65.

6.   James Blackwell, et al., The Gulf War: Military Lessons Learned (Washington: 1991) p.47.

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1.   B. H. Liddle-Hart, Strategy (NY: 1964), p.351.

2.   C. von Clausewitz, On War (NJ: 1989), p.125.

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